

St. Patrick's Church (Roman Catholic)  
Northwest corner of Adams and Desplaines Streets  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1033

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
35-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

ADDITIONAL  
FOLLOWS...

## ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH (ROMAN CATHOLIC)

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
35-

Location: Northwest corner of Adams and Desplaines Streets,  
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Bishop of Chicago.

Present Priest: The Rev. Stephen O'Donnell.

Present Use: Roman Catholic Church.

Statement of  
Significance: St. Patrick's, built in the 1850's, is one of the  
few surviving examples of this early period of  
Chicago Architecture. Having survived the 1871  
Fire, it is the oldest church in Chicago.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Under continuous ownership of the Bishop of Chicago.
2. Date of erection: The present site was purchased in 1850 and foundations were begun in 1852 under the direction of the Rev. Patrick J. McLaughlin. The work was suspended for a time and taken up again by the Rev. Dennis Dunne, D.D., who reconstructed the foundations. The Church was opened in 1856. The original design included spires which were not added until 1885.
3. Alterations and additions: In 1871, under the direction of the Rev. Conway, the building was raised three or four feet to the level of the grade, a basement was added, and the interior was renovated; in 1873, the gallery was built and an organ and three altars were added; total cost: \$20,000. In 1884 the Rev. T. F. Galligan completely changed the interior and in 1885 finished the spires of the building. The present windows by Thomas O'Shaughnessy, based on Celtic designs picturing eleven Irish saints, were installed in the 1920's. From 1943 to 1952, under the direction of the Rev. Richard Wolfe, much interior restoration was carried out including the green floor and pews, and repainted walls. The walls and ceilings, painted by the Bertrand Murray family, are designs from the Book of Kells, similar to those of the windows.

The following list of additions and alterations is based on an inspection of the fabric. Facade (East Side): the front

steps and railings, and the three main doors are recent additions. The gable, originally pointed, has been cut down and finished off level. New brick work shows at the top of the south tower. North and south sides on the exterior. New basement windows and doors; glass block in sacristy windows. West end: New room and stair at northwest corner, bridge leading to rectory added. Narthex: Doors, linoleum wainscoting, and heating and lighting fixtures, are new; outer mouldings of door frames have been removed. North Tower: Toilet and closet added under stairway at main floor level. The sacristies have been entirely remodelled and new storage units added. A new cafeteria has been built in the basement.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

St. Patrick's was the second Roman Catholic Church to be founded in Chicago; its parish once included all of Chicago west of the Chicago River. During the Civil War it was the home parish of the Irish Legion, the 90th Infantry. It survived the Fire of 1871, and served as a center for refugees.

C. Sources of Information:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. Vol. I. Chicago: Published by the Author, 1884. p. 294.

\_\_\_\_\_. History of Chicago. Vol. III. Chicago: Published by the Author, 1884. p. 767.

"Centennial of St. Patrick's Church, 1856-1956."

A booklet located in St. Patrick's rectory, probably written by the Rev. Thomas P. Byrne, Pastor. Included is a typed note clipped in the booklet, referring to an earlier building: "Excerpts from the Bishop's Diary, Chicago."

Chicago Daily News, March 14, 1942.  
Pictures.

Chicago Daily News, March 17, 1956.  
Pictures.

Fuller, Ernst. "Famous Chicago Buildings," Chicago Tribune, March 14, 1959.  
Pictures.

"Old St. Patrick's Church History," from 75th Anniversary of the Diocese Book-Diamond Jubilee Book. Typed copy, 4 pages, located in St. Patrick's rectory.

McCahill, Delores. "Oldest Church Building Survived Great Fire," Chicago Sun Times, January 3, 1955.

Pakenham, Mary. In the Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1960.

"Photograph of Survey No. 143578 for Archdiocese of Chicago, 719 N. Wabash Avenue," by Irwin P. Barron & Co., Land Surveying Service, 166 W. Washington Street, Chicago, Ill. Located in St. Patrick's rectory. Undated - probably 1920-30.  
Pictures.

"St. Patrick's Church," The New World, April 14, et. seq.,  
Typed copy, 3 pages. Located in St. Patrick's rectory.

D. Old Views:

Gilbert, Paul, and Bryson, Charles Lee. Chicago and Its Makers. Chicago, 1929. p. 475.

Shows an old photo of St. Patrick's, apparently taken before 1885. The towers end at the first row of corbels and have low, eight-sided pyramidal roofs. The middle of the facade bore a gable, and the present steps were in place at that time.

E. Supplementary Information:

1. A Group of documents entitled "History of Old St. Patrick's," located in the rectory of the Church, collected by Father Stephen O'Donnell, the present pastor, includes the following:

a. Pictures: Five exterior views of the church and surrounding area from: Photograph of Survey No. 143578 for Archdiocese of Chicago Chancery Office, 719 N. Wabash Avenue, by Irwin P. Barron & Co., Land Surveying Service, 166 W. Washington Street, undated, probably 1920-30.

b. Booklet: "Centennial of St. Patrick's Church, 1856-1956," probably written by the Rev. Thomas P. Byrne, Pastor.

1) "Excerpts from the Bishop's Diary, Chicago"  
(typed note clipped in the booklet, referring to an earlier building):

"1846 - March 10th. The frame of the building being erected for St. Patrick's Church on the west side of the river, Chicago, was raised today. The building was undertaken at the earnest desire of the Rev. Walter J. Quarter, who undertook to collect

and pay for it."

"Easter Sunday, April 12th. St. Patrick's Church on the west side of the river opened today for divine service by the Rev. W. J. Quarter."

- 2) "Father Richard F. Wolfe, during his tenure of office from 1943 to December, 1952 restored the exterior and the interior of all the parish buildings." p. 8
- 3) "St. Patrick's Church today is the most distinctive Irish Church in the midwest. Newly decorated it is a veritable 'Bit of Heaven' with the influence of the Book of Kells in its interior motif of green, its symbols and design of ancient Celtic art, and its stained glass windows freshly restored to their original beauty. Its history is the record of Irish settlement in our city and parallels the history of Chicago." p. 9

- c. Typed (4 page) copy: "Old St. Patrick's Church History," 75th Anniversary of the Diocese Book-Diamond Jubilee Book:

"Soon after the first church was erected, in 1846, the Rev. Patrick J. McLaughlin became Pastor and the church having proved too small for the congregation, Father McLaughlin enlarged it. In 1850 the property at the corner of Desplaines and Adams Streets was purchased and also a house nearby in which a school was established. . .

"Father McLaughlin commenced the erection of a brick and stone church on the lots at the corner of Desplaines and Adams Streets, but only the foundation wall and a wall about eight feet high was laid when the work was suspended for a time.

"Very Rev. Dennis Dunne, D.D. succeeded Father McLaughlin as pastor and soon took up the building of the new church. The foundations laid by Father McLaughlin were so badly damaged, that Father Dunne decided to reconstruct them. He made such progress that the new church was sufficiently completed to be used for religious purposes in the summer of 1856. . .

"When entirely completed, St. Patrick's was one of the finest churches in Chicago. The Romanesque style of architecture was employed, stained glass windows were installed and the fresco and decoration were in advance of the time. . .

"During the Civil War it was a virtual war center and it was from St. Patrick's portals, so to speak, that the Irish Legion, the 90th Infantry, one of the worthiest regiments of the Civil War, went forth to fight for the Union. . ."

- d. Typed (3 pages) copy: "St. Patrick's Church," The New World, April 14, et. seq., 1900:

". . . until June, 1871, when he [Father O'Gara] was succeeded by Father Conway. When he took charge of the parish, the church was three or four feet below grade, and the task of 'raising' such a large edifice at this time was a herculean one.

"St. Patrick's having escaped the great fire, was long the refuge of the burned-out worshipers. It was completed the following spring, the expense of the 'raising' of the church, together with the preparation of the basement, amounted to \$20,000. The interior of the church was completely renovated.

". . . in 1884 the Rev. T. F. Galligan, then pastor of St. Pius, succeeded Father Terry, and in the following year he completely changed the interior of the church and finished the spires of the church."

2. The following are taken from newspaper clippings in the Chicago Historical Society. Page numbers were not included in the collection.

a. Pictures:

1) Exterior views:

- a) Chicago Tribune, March 14, 1959.
- b) Chicago Daily News, March 14, 1942.
- c) Chicago Daily News, March 17, 1956.

2) Interiors: Chicago Daily News, March 14, 1942.  
(The "Faith Window," St. Patrick's Shrine, view of high altar and surrounding features.)

3) "In the vestibule are framed photos taken in old St. Patrick Church's younger days." Chicago Tribune, March 14, 1959. These are no longer there.

- b. Ernest Fuller, "Famous Chicago Buildings," Chicago Tribune, March 14, 1959.

"The parish was the second founded by the Catholic Church

in the city and originally covered all of Chicago west of the river, which probably did not include much in that founding year of 1846. . .

"Its first building was a wooden structure in old Haymarket square near Randolph and Desplaines streets. . . Six years later the present stone and brick building was started, but a cholera epidemic delayed construction and completion did not come until the summer of 1856 /the corner stone was laid March 17, 1856/. St. Patrick's incidentally, was one of the few buildings in the central area to survive the great fire of 1871 and it was a refuge for the victims.

"Not until 1885 did the building receive the two spires that distinguished it from other churches in Chicago. One is Romanesque in style /south/, symbolizing the church in the western world; the other Byzantine /north/ for the church in the east, and together they signify the universality of the faith, said Father Byrne.

". . . The pews, walls, and floors--and even the votive candle holders--are all in various shades of emerald. Designs of the scroll work are taken from the ancient Book of Kells and the stained glass windows depict various Irish saints.

". . . Adjoining the church are the parish house and three other buildings, housing St. Patrick's grade school, St. Patrick's High School for the girls, a gymnasium, and the convent.

"St. Patrick's for years was one of the city's most populous parishes. . . Then industry moved in began replacing homes."

- c. Dolores McCahill, "Oldest Church Building Survived Great Fire," Chicago Sun Times, January 3, 1955.

"While other Chicago churches were established before this one, the buildings were destroyed in the fire or replaced in subsequent years. St. Patrick's as well as being the oldest church structure here, is the oldest semipublic building in the city.

". . . a church considered to be a prominent example of a Celtic Art. . . eleven Irish Saints are pictured in the stained glass windows. Above the altar are statues of St. Patrick, Pope St. Celestine, who sent him to Ireland as a missionary, and St. Palladius."

- d. Mary Pakenham, in the Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1960.

"Father Wolfe, also hired the family painting team of Mr. and Mrs. Bertrand Murray and their son Michael, an Irish family that lives at 1825 Orleans Street. The Murrays painted St. Patrick's ceiling under Father Wolfe's direction and the walls under Father Byrne's. Most of the church is covered with the curious intertwining designs from the Book of Kells--the cross and vine, the dragon, the fish and the serpents.

"Mrs. Murray . . . has also painted medallions of the four evangelists on the chancel wall."

3. A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago, Vol. I (Chicago: Published by the Author, 1884), p. 294:

"Its style of architecture was the Romanesque. Stained glass windows were used, and interior was for the time at which the church was erected, elegantly frescoed. It is a two-story building, basement of stone, and the upper story containing the main auditorium, of brick. The auditorium including the large gallery facing the pulpit, has a seating capacity of about 1,200. Originally it was the design to ornament the building with a high spire at each front corner, but this has not been accomplished."

Andreas, Vol. III, p. 767:

"In 1873, the Rev. P. J. Conway had a gallery built in the church building, the interior handsomely frescoed, a fine organ put in and also three new altars, and made other improvements, at a total cost of \$20,000."

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka  
Historian  
National Park Service  
July 1963

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a large brick church built in the 1850's. It is one of the few surviving examples of Chicago architecture of this period, and is characteristic of the use of Romanesque forms in the United States in the 1840's and 50's, dependent mainly on earlier work in Germany. See: Carroll L. V. Meeks, "The Romanesque Before Richardson in the United States," Art Bulletin, Vol. XXXV (1953), pp. 17-33.



2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 71'-6" (east front) x 157'; one story on partially elevated basement.
2. Foundations: Joliet limestone.
3. Wall construction: Brick, painted tan.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick exterior walls. Wooden roof trusses supported on wooden posts set within the brick walls.
5. Porches: Later concrete entrance porch, nine steps high from sidewalk to narthex floor level.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Three main doorways on east facade, semi-circular arched heads, center doorway slightly larger than other two, double doors in each doorway, later wooden doors. Doors on the sides and rear lead to lower level.
  - b. Windows: Nave lit by tall, round-arched windows filled with later stained glass. Apse windows and some basement windows filled with glass block.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingles.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Corbelled brick cornice on front and sides. Apparently the present horizontal parapet on the front replaces one that originally followed the line of the gable roof.
  - c. Towers: Two octagonal towers, at either corner of the east front, finished above the roof line with open belfries, and with a hemi-spherical dome on the north tower and a tall pointed spire on the south tower.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Narthex across east end of church, stairs in the corner towers at the east end, large open rectangular nave with medium-sized apse at the west end, tall later altar, divided apse with sacristy at the rear, additional sacristy space in small rooms to either side of apse, large balcony at west end of nave, cafeteria in basement of adjoining school.

2. Stairways: Circular wooden stairs in each tower connect basement level to nave level to balcony level.
3. Flooring: Wooden flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster. The ceilings are covered with stenciled patterns that repeat the design of the windows.
5. Doorways and doors: Panelled wooden doors set in heavily molded wooden frames. Later aluminum doors between narthex and nave.
6. Trim: Center portion of the wooden roof trusses are exposed within the nave and are cased and refinished with round arched forms. Deep plaster brackets appear to support the arches which lead to flat pilasters against the walls. Statuary niches are set into the pilasters. Pulpit, altar, and statues are of wood and plaster, have complex forms, and are brightly painted and gilded.
7. Lighting: Electric lighting.
8. Heating: Central heating.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The church faces east at the northwest corner of Desplaines and Adams Streets. It is surrounded on the north and west by church property with other buildings closely grouped around it. The Rectory is directly to the west, and school building to the north.

Prepared by Osmund Overby  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1963

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Addendum to:  
ST PATRICK'S CHURCH  
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HABS No. IL-1033

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Data pages 1 through 9 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 10.

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- 4     5" x 7" glass plate negatives (2 stereopairs) produced by  
Perry E. Borchers of the Ohio State University in 1963.

One survey control contact print per plate; survey control  
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LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-101L \*     DIAGONAL VIEW, EAST FRONT, SOUTH SIDE

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-101R     DIAGONAL VIEW, EAST FRONT, SOUTH SIDE

Left and right overlap: 95%

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-102L \*     DIAGONAL VIEW, WEST REAR, SOUTH SIDE

LC-HABS-GS05-T-2656-102R     DIAGONAL VIEW, WEST REAR, SOUTH SIDE

Left and right overlap: 85%

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

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